



## Counter uses of the city: cultural consumption and gentrification

### Contra-usos da cidade: consumo cultural e gentrificação

**Rogério Proença de Sousa Leite**

Doutor em Ciências Sociais

Institution: Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS)

Address: Rua Marechal Rondon, S/N, Rosa Elze, São Cristóvão – SE,

CEP: 49100-000

E-mail: rproleite@academico.ufs.br

#### ABSTRACT

This article argues that ennobled urban spaces are places of consumption, in which contemporary processes of gentrification promote a double movement: they make local cultural contents more flexible and, otherwise, they rehabilitate certain local cultural contents, aiming at the re-traditionalization of these spaces of urban consumption by insertion of local cultural events as a way of legitimizing urban interventions based on a supposedly common cultural tradition.

**Keywords:** cities, local cultural, gentrification.

#### RESUMO

Este artigo argumenta que os espaços urbanos enobrecidos são locais de consumo, nos quais os processos contemporâneos de gentrificação promovem um duplo movimento: flexibilizam os conteúdos culturais locais e, por outro lado, reabilitam determinados conteúdos culturais locais, visando à re-traditionalização desses espaços de consumo urbano pela inserção de eventos culturais locais como forma de legitimar intervenções urbanas baseadas em uma suposta tradição cultural comum.

**Palavras-chave:** cidades, cultura local, gentrificação.

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

Many have pointed out the practical limits that the cultural uprooting of certain spaces of modern cities rise in our everyday ontological senses. In cultural contexts of consumption, these up rootings can either mean a widening or a narrowing of the possibilities of use of such places<sup>1</sup>. At first glance, places with

---

<sup>1</sup> As I have previously suggested (LEITE, 2007), we can understand the *places* as physical and symbolic demarcations of space, whose uses qualify them and give them a sense of belonging, guiding social actions and being reflexively delimited by them.



attenuated local cultural characteristics would be attenuated more liable to extensive consumerist practices, to the same extent as the absence of strong traditional characteristics would allow for a more efficient flow of the global components of culture. However, places that are very uprooted from their local cultural inscriptions are equally little liable to consumption, once tradition is also a changeable component in contemporary social interactions, mediated as they are by the practices of consumption. (Appadurai, 1986). Moreover, the flexibilization of cultural contents of these places of consumption has its limit on the border of compromising the ontological foundations of security.

Enobled urban spaces are precisely one of those places of consumption, in which the contemporary processes of *gentrification*<sup>2</sup> promote a double movement: they adjust flexibilizations of local cultural contents at the same time as they rehabilitate certain local cultural contents, aiming at the retradicionalizing of these niches of urban consumption by the insertion of popular culture events as a means of legitimizing the urban interventions based on a supposed common cultural tradition. At this point lies one of the challenges of the processes of *gentrification*, we want to discuss here: how to reconcile the necessary flexibilization of cultural contents which allow the insertion of such spaces in the flow of world symbolic consumption with the equally necessary retradicionalizing that culturally and politically legitimates the processes of urban ennoblement.

## 2 MISFITTING AND RETRADICIONALIZING

It is known that situations of shared normative tradition tend to generate stable ties of solidarity, strengthening what Giddens (1991) called the psychosocial effects of communal belief or what Anderson (1991) highlighted as the sublimation of differences for a brotherly communitary relationship. However, the ambivalence of the normative effect of traditions finds its most acute

---

<sup>2</sup> As I have discussed in a previous work (LEITE, 2002, 2007, 2013), I understand *gentrification*, based on Smith (1996), Zukin (1995), Featherstone (1995) and Harvey (1992), as those urban interventions directed to *city marketing*, whose practices include a set of interventions directed to the changing of degraded historical sites into urban areas of urban entertainment and cultural consumption.



expression in what Hall (1995) called the "decentering of the modern subject" to describe the process of fragmentation of the national ballast that structure identities in contemporary.

The global flows of people, signs, information and capital that cross one another in nation-space can mean a substantive change in the "ontological security's" constitutive ties (Giddens, 1991), which were traditionally takes as parameters for local identities. Other forms of *representation* emerge, shifting the axis of identity and safety of subjects for more nuclear forms of shared meanings, like the urban subcultures and their places which make up the "reflexive communities" that Scott Lash stated (1997). It is in this very direction that Habermas will also highlight the weakening of the general systems of cultural legitimacy to ensure the democratic ties of European Nation states, who will suggest to such problems the overcoming of unilateral traditions and the creation of an essentially legal normativity, devoid of any specific cultural content (LEITE, 1998).

In the very urban context of metropolises, the contemporary reconfigurations of the places of traditions have shifted everyday social practices to indefinite contexts in time and space (Harvey, 1992). These places of memory cease to express only the senses of the place they represent to incorporate into their own constitution elements that are global (Giddens, 1991: 110). The concomitant permanence of these globalized traits in specific spheres of social life explains how the processes of globalization associated with the traditional contexts, defining a "reflexive modernization" (Giddens, 1997). Two derivations arise with these processes of misfitting: 1) to the displacement of social relations there correspond inversely processes of re-fitting, and 2) the de-tradicionalizing - that "dissolves" locality – recompose local custom and turn them into relics. By "re-fitting" Giddens understands the "reappropriation or reshaping of misfit social relations in a way as to compromising them (though partially or temporarily) to local conditions of time and place" (Giddens, 1991:83).

Somehow this *re-fitting* means a re-location of social processes, even if the process of *misfitting* keep altering the contextual meanings of the locality. This



combination allows the understanding the complex articulation between the global and the local within the reflexive modernization. The traditions, which find their clearest expression in their local roots, are re-elaborated in light of the processes that go beyond the nation's reach. In a typical relation of reflexivity of high modernity, the ballast to the most recurrent ideas of national identity needs to be expanded so that traditional and localized expressions of culture can get into a dialogue with the intensification of information, signs and capital flows that make social relations *misfit* and launch them into various and indefinite interactions in time and space. An important consequence of these processes that clarifies the reflexive articulation between the global and the local is the changing of local custom into relic as a way of re-locating the tradition in contexts marked by *de-tradicionalizing*, which can be understood exactly as the reshaping of local custom by external influences by which the custom keep on existing in the altered form of its meanings as relic or habit (Giddens, 1997).

### **3 RELICS MARKET: CULTURAL CONSUMPTION AND GENTRIFICATION**

One of the most recurrent features in the practice of *gentrification* has been exactly this *re-location* of culture, through which the traditions are re-established and start to talk in their altered state with the processes and / or products from the symbolic market of cultural goods. This aspect characterizes the predominantly hybrid trend of the high culture in modernity, whose terms "glocal" or "glocalization" stand out as expressions that announce the liminar basis of the contemporary social experience (Featherstone, 1997; Canclini, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Hall, 1995).

On that topic, Carlos Fortuna (1997), examining the "*revitalization*" of the city of Evora, Portugal, calls the "innovative conservation of the traditional element" precisely the process that tries to match local traditions to the global demands of the cultural consumption. This dimension of consumption, typical of the policies of *gentrification*, has updated, as Featherstone (1995) claims, the links between the culture of consumption and the production of goods in contemporary society: "(...) in the first place, in economy's cultural dimension, the



symbolization and the use of material goods as 'communicators', not only as utilities; secondly, in the economy of cultural goods, the principles of market - supply, demand, accumulation of capital, competition and monopolizing – that operate from 'within' the sphere of lifestyles, cultural goods and commodities "(Featherstone, 1995:121).

I would like at this point, to bring back a reflection already done previously (Autior, 2007) about cultural consumption. Although the fundamental argument that justifies the current cultural policies of *gentrification* is still based on the idea of tradition, there is a change in how to operate this concept, in that it assumes a resumption of the idea of the national heritage, plus a marketing concept that deals with this cultural heritage as a commodity. This marketing concept implies that the rationality of the preservation has its focus directed to the practices that can add value to cultural goods, in the sense of allowing a profitability of investments made, plus the potential profits that the restored good can provide. Referring to heritage as a *cultural commodity* means emphasizing its exchange value from the expansion of the economic spectrum of its use value. The central problem of that perspective is not the existence of an economic dimension of culture, but the reduction of cultural value to the economic value, which could subsume the nature of cultural nature of heritage, ending up in a kind of "fetishization" of culture.

I believe that, at this point, we should talk about two dimensions of *consumption* in that context: the first refers to the properly economical dimension of exchange, related to the ownership of goods and defined by the financial possibilities of access to products and services available on the market. The other is related to the cultural meanings of the symbolic act of consuming, as a social practice that differentiates tastes and lifestyles and demarcates, as Featherstone highlights, social relations: "If you can assert the functioning of a 'logic of capital' derived from the production, it may as well be possible to assert also a 'logic of consumption', pointing at the socially structured ways of using goods to demarcate social relations "(Featherstone, 1995: 35).



That logic of consumption, applied to interactive practices in the spaces of *gentrification*, adds to the theme of heritage the possibility of understanding how public sociabilities marked by the socioespacialization of affirmed *differences* structure themselves also from the different ways of consuming the cultural goods. Antonio Arantes resumes the debate on the role of the market in cultural practices to emphasize that "(...) far from simply generating homogeneity, the market stimulates the generation and circulation of all kinds of resources capable of producing senses of place and of difference" (Arantes, 2000: 64).

The sense of cultural consumption, therefore, should be understood as a practice that goes beyond the instrumental rationality of the act of buying products in a direction that affirms uses and processes of appropriation of *signs*. And this logic of the signs exchange, as Baudrillard states (1981), has as a goal the production of singularities. Although this author exacerbates the notion of the sense of the practices of consumption with his concept of "exchange value-sign" (which often results in a questionable denial of the real needs underlying the use values of goods in the act of trades), he asserts the symbolic dimension of consumption, which enables us to adjust the concept beyond a purely economic mechanism. For Baudrillard, there is a socially "(...) vital urgency of having to produce oneself as meaning in a system of trade and relations. Simultaneously with the production of goods, there is urgency to produce meanings, senses, to ensure that there is a one-to-the-other before the one and the other exist for themselves"(Baudrillard, 1981: 74).

In this way, bearing in mind that "to consume is also, therefore, to exchange meanings" (Canclini, 1993: 29), the economic dimension of consumption (related to the needs) may limit the interactive possibilities in the context of the practices of *gentrification*, but the cultural consumption (related to the enlarged senses of the uses), instead of competing for the emptying of the public space may indicate the complex and ambivalent permanence of a political dissent of *places*, which feeds from the various *uses* and consumption of *places*. This cultural ambiguity of the heritage, thought through the notion of use, refers to the issue of the challenges of building a political identity within a society that



hopes to be democratic. Thus, and beyond an official perspective that takes to itself the supposed knowledge of the meanings of goods to be put under governmental trust, it is possible to understand heritage through the meanings attributed to it, as Durham asserts (1984): "From this perspective, we must try to define the heritage in relation according to the meaning it has to the population, recognizing that the basic element in the perception of the meaning of a cultural good lies in the use the society makes of it" (Durham, 1984: 30).

The process of assigning value to the cultural goods retains thus an essentially political dimension, when considered in the terms proposed by Durham. The *use* (or the "value-sign," according to Baudrillard) that makes a cultural good in a society of consumption can often be in conflict with the economic value assigned to it, since every value dimension necessarily mean choices, forms and perspectives in *looking* and *relating* to a cultural good. Two forms of cultural value defined by Menezes (2000) help to clarify the nature of the values of use of a cultural good in distinguishing the "emotional value" from the "pragmatic value" of cultural goods. "(...) The first concerns "(...)...the subjective relationships of individuals (in society) with spaces, structures, objects (...) that feed the processes of identity or the social memory "(Menezes, 2000: 38). The "pragmatic value", in turn, can be understood as "the use values perceived as qualities" (Menezes, 2000: 38). A concept of use that recovers the meanings assigned by society to cultural goods should combine the "effective value", which restores a sense of "belonging" of individuals, and the "pragmatic value", which involves the qualified use of goods without making any reduction to one specific use. Neglecting this extended notion of use can contribute to a reduction of the spectrum value of a cultural good, since it would consider it only as a commodity likely to be traded from a specific need.

As a symbol, a cultural good increases its exchange value in proportion as its use values, defined by different agents, diversify. Appadurai (1986) highlights, on this aspect, the asymmetrical nature of cultural values of the goods. Not always the symbolic exchanges, involving cultural goods, have an equivalence of values and meanings equally between the parties, such as economic exchanges



require. The "value systems", as defined by the author, depend on the specificities of the contextual and cultural meanings of the exchange:

"The variety of such contexts, within and across societies provides the link between the social environment of commodity and its temporal and symbolic state" (Appadurai, 1986: 15).

The practices of *gentrification* are distinguished, therefore, from other traditional forms of allocation of value and preservation of heritage, in using a comprehensive selection of goods, based on criteria that go beyond the value conception of *nation*. However, policies of preservation that rely on the questionable idea of a national (or local) memory, or those that are guided by no less questionable logic of consumption, are equally *selective* forms of symbolic intervention and appropriation, built from certain social conceptions: one supposes a shared memory to be effective for convergent actions within a nation (or of a place that represents it), the other channels the potential value of consumption actions within the cultural market.

Another distinction is still needed to clarify the concept of cultural consumption in the practices of *gentrification*. Although there are some approximate relations, the policies of *gentrification* do not mingle with certain phenomena known as *cultural industry*. This term, as it is known, was used in 1947, by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, to describe the ideological process of technical reproduction and mass distribution of artistic goods. The *mass media* deals with culture as a commodity and, similarly to *gentrification*, conducts its operations to the demands of the market, whose users are also considered as consumers. Both in the *indústria cultural* and in the urban policies of *gentrification*, the artistic goods and the cultural heritage are treated as a commodity, subject to the economic rationality of trade. One Horkheimer and Adorno's observation on the transformation of art into a consumption product summarizes the closeness between the cultural industry and the practices of *gentrification*: "The truth, whose real name is business, is their ideology" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2000 : 170). However, two basic differences distinguish the two cases. First, the *indústria cultural* operates



ideologically with the idea of standardization of cultural goods, considered in the context of the fordist accumulation of monopoly capitalism, and having as a target a specific consumption public. The idea for the series production is its basic feature: "The cultural industry abuses the consideration with the masses to reiterate, uphold and strengthen their mentality, that it takes as given a priori and immutable. (...) The masses are not the measure but the ideology of the cultural industry, although the latter can not exist without adapting to it (Adorno, 1987: 288).

While *gentrification* may also result in standardized urban landscapes, which could be consumed by any person, the logic of intervention is not based on the lack of distinction of goods produced to the masses. Considered in the context of flexible accumulation, the construction of singularities works in the differentiation and elitization of urban spaces, whose consumers, unlike the masses, are only a limited and differentiates portion of the population. Finally, while the cultural industry operates within a perspective of standardization of tastes and products, the practices of *gentrification* bet on the singularity and differentiation of the acts of consumption.

#### **4 FORMER ENNOBLEMENT IN OLD RECIFE, BRAZIL: HERITAGE AS CULTURAL CONSUMPTION**

In Brazil, one of the most significant experiences of *gentrification* happened in the historic District of Recife, capital of the state Pernambuco, whose process of ennoblement was started in the 90s. The neighborhood was the original core of the city, where the first urban plans of Recife were started, such as the Mauricio de Nassau's plan of Dutch expansion of, with the engineer Peter Post. (Freyre, 1996). For years, the District port was one of the most important in America, especially at the peak of the cycle of sugar (Bernardes, 1996; Perruca, 1978). With its thin terraced houses and narrow streets, the district was the target of a major reform at the beginning of the twentieth century, following the example of Rio de Janeiro hygienist reforms which followed the Parisian principles of Haussmann's the reform (Lubambo, 1991; LEITE, 2007). Rebuilt according to



the style of nineteenth century paris, with its eclectic style, the district went through its phase of *protogentrification* (Smith, 1996) and became one of the most sophisticated areas of the city, a symbol of a late modernity that was sought in Brazil.

In the post-war period, until the mid-'80s, the district suffered the same emptying that struck most of the major port cities of Brazil. With the loss of the habitation functions, the neighborhood became an inhospitable area, privileged point of prostitution and a decadent bohemia. In the '90s, the actual process of ennoblement or *gentrification* of the neighborhood began, with the recovery of part of its historical heritage and its transformation into an extensive area of leisure and consumption for the middle classes.

The ennoblement phase of the District coincides with the development of a new model for preservation of historical heritage in Brazil, whose main orientation could be identified in a symptomatic sentence of the then Minister of Culture, Francisco Weffort: "*The Cultural Heritage in Brazil is not only a question of culture, but also an economic matter.*"<sup>3</sup> This relationship between heritage and economy is not something new in the policies of preservation. In an article from 1983 on Paris, Certeau (1996) emphasized that the policy of renovation of damaged neighborhoods went back to the Malraux law (1962), whose strategies or rehabilitation of heritage were based on a kind of aesthetic intervention that operated from a logic of the market through the reactivation of trade and real estate value recovery.<sup>4</sup> In the Venice Chart (1964) and the Meeting of Quito (1967), the international conservation agencies also started the discussion on the need for private investment in the practices of preservation, in view of the scarce public resources for the sector. In Brazil, there began from the 70s the process of decentralization of heritage policies, until then concentrated at the Institute of

---

<sup>3</sup> Weffort, Francisco. "Selected Articles". In: website of the Ministry of Culture, Brazil, in March 1999.

<sup>4</sup> The Malraux Law, referring to André Malraux, then Minister of Education and Culture of France, represented an important state initiative in preserving the damaged neighborhoods (Malraux Law, 1980). As Perrin (1980) highlights, the Malraux Law inaugurates a new policy of preserving the French heritage, introducing a policy of tax incentives to owners that carried out the restoration, anticipating a practice that would be very usual in the late 90s in the policies of *gentrification* (Perrin, 1980).



National Historical and Artistic Heritage – IPHAN, Brazilian federal government agency responsible for the national policy for preservation<sup>5</sup>. Mainly due to the impossibility of the IPHAN maintaining, with the federal government's resources, an updated schedule of maintenance and conservation of such heritage, the decentralization of policies for preservation in Brazil represented, as Freitas (1992) highlights, a stage of transition in which the heritage was gradually incorporated to urban policies, combined with regional development and tourism increase<sup>6</sup>.

The central point in the debate in the 70s and 80s, however, was anchored in a developmental perspective, in which the Government has the central role in the gathering of resources and in the implementation of projects. The embryonic notion of sustainability seemed only an additional feature, a sort of financial safeguard for a new reality that imposed itself: more than preserve a heritage good, it was necessary to rethink its uses, depending on the need for a good to offer enough economic return to justify a private investment.

In the nineties, however, there was an accentuation of the perspective of preservation turned to the market. The participation of the private sector in the management of policies for heritage involves a complex change in heritage, from the "symbolic good" to the "cultural good". The process involves forms of interaction based on consumption and requires, first, an operationalization of the forms of preservation from the market needs. In practice, this means a selection of goods that could potentially meet the expectations of financial return of high private investment. From this perspective, it is unlikely that the choice is made

---

<sup>5</sup> Created in the government Getúlio Vargas, through decree-law no. 25, November 30, 1937.

<sup>6</sup> One of the landmarks of this process of decentralization were the Governors Summits (Brasília, 1970 and Salvador, 1971), at which new strategies for conservation with the participation of States were outlined. One of the consequences of this meeting was the convening of financial agencies for habitation and tourism, such as the National Housing Bank (BNH) and the Brazilian Tourism Agency - Embratur. Two important regional plans of preservation arise during this period: the *Historic Cities Program* (PCH), from which stemmed Integrated Program for the Reconstruction of Northeastern Historic Cities in May of 1973, and the I Integrated Plan for the Development of the Metropolitan Area of Recife, of the Foundation for Development of the Metropolitan Area of Recife - FIDEM, from which there stemmed the Plan of the Preservation of Historic Sites in the Metropolitan Region of Recife (PPSH-RMR) in 1978.



less as a result of the meanings properly historical and architectural of the goods, as a result of greater economic rationality of investments. As a more direct result of this kind of intervention focused on the urban market, there happens the proliferation of services and products for the consumer, through which the processes of *gentrification* suggest an elitization of these spaces, as they create what Featherstone calls the "*aesthetization of everyday life*"(1995:111). More than a segregation of space through restrictions on the consumption of these products and services, defined by the excluding criteria of income, this "*aesthetization*" is also related to lifestyles of an urban middle class, whose habits and aesthetic sensibilities seem increasingly more marked by the mimetic pursuit of certain public areas that offer at the same time, leisure and security.

These experiences of "revitalization" have divided opinions and highlighted the news concepts that permeate the debate on cultural heritage, such as identity, citizenship, democracy and memory. The policies of heritage in Brazil have always been geared to the idea of building a national memory (Arantes, 2000), anchored in cultural policies centralized by the government and relying on a conception of heritage as a *political place* (for the construction of the idea of nation), articulating a conception of public space and citizenship based on the notion of belonging (*nationess*). The fundamental argument that justifies the current cultural policies of *gentrification* continues based on the concept of tradition, although changed by the addition to the idea of a national heritage a market conception that considers heritage a cultural commodity. Rather than assume the effectiveness of a shared memory for convergent actions within a nation (or of a place that represents it), the practices of *gentrification* channel tradition as the potential value for consumption acts within the market. Contemporary projects of ennoblement, as the reinforce the market aspects of heritage, also alter the public and political meaning of urban space, as they take the citizen as a consumer, updating the links between consumption culture and the production of commodities in contemporary society (Featherstone, 1995). They aim at, therefore, articulating a convergent axis between *tradition* and *consumption*, considering: (1) the historical centers as places of convergence of



the population with a common past, an expression of identity memory of the nation, tradition and citizenship, and (2) the intervention as a way to recover an urban space as a "public space" of leisure, entertainment and consumption of the population.

The practices of ennoblement in Recife resulted in the creation of a space for the "urban spectacle" that would characterize the whole of the *Plan of Revitalization of the District of Recife*. This is an important indicator of a policy of ennoblement, in that it confirms the predominantly economic focus of the actions planned, as well as the type of expected usage for each one. To facilitate the implementation of the proposal some "structural elements" have been set, among which stand out: "Local Economy with full central function", "Space for public assembly and spectacle," "Maintenance and enhancement of environmental and cultural heritage," "Recovery of the image of the neighborhood."<sup>7</sup> These "structuring elements" covering and convergent with key issues and policies of ennoblement of the urban enterprise: the construction of a new image of the city, through the valuing of the economic uses of the cultural heritage and of the spectacularization of the urban space, as a way to reactivate the flows of investment for the local economy. This image, constructed by a vision that understands culture from the perspective of economic results, and the city as an enterprise, expected the concentration of offices of large companies and corporations, strengthening in the neighborhood "the image of a central and noble space of the city". The blocks of animation of the Rua do Bom Jesus in (the main core of intervention) were made viable not only by reforms in the physical structure of the area, but mainly by the schedule of events that the Town Hall started to keep and that delimited different types of uses of places. The *culture turn* of enterprise urbanism started to be active in the District of Recife as a mechanism for legitimizing an image attractive to the consuming public as well as to potential new investors.

---

<sup>7</sup> Agency for Economic Development of the State of Pernambuco - AD / DIPER. (1992), *Revitalization Plan - District of Recife*. Urban Planning and Economics vol.1, Recife, p. 37-39



The impact of these investments resulted in a change in the urban landscape of the District of Recife, whose main feature, focused on the creation of a *mix* of leisure and consumption, redesigned the profile of the place: the District became the area of greatest concentration of bars and restaurants in the city of Recife. Part of the new image built for the place was based precisely on that singularity of being one of the only places where the consumer would have several options in an area of small physical dimensions, like a *food court* in a shopping center.

The process of *gentrification* that reinvented the District of Recife as a place to visit replaced in the sphere of consumption the traditional meanings of history. The memory of the District, inscribed into its architectural heritage and into the daily life of older residents, was subsumed by the strategies of urban marketing, which equipped the former *Povoado dos Arrecifes* with an open air *shopping center*.

The possibly alienated dimension of the retraditionalized heritage, which suggests the existence of a fetishism of traditions, relates to the issues raised by Giddens (1997), on the transformation of the heritage into *relics* in the post-traditional society. For Giddens, this transformation occurs when local customs lose their connections with the present and tend to persist as a "relic". One of the consequences of this transformation is that the relic loses its effective relationship with the area where it already exists, but is produced as an icon to any possible observer:

"A relic has no connection with the actual area where it exists, but is produced as an icon for observation of any person who wishes to visit her. Like other pieces in a museum, it may be at the place where it was originated, but this fact has little relevance to its nature, which is like a signifier of the difference. A relic is like a vestige of memory stripped of its collective structures (Giddens, 1997: 126).

This conception of design implies, similarly, in some form of distancing from the heritage with its meanings of the past, as Martin-Barbero also highlights:

"The past stops being, then, part of the memory, and becomes an ingredient of the pastiche, this very operation which allows us to mix the facts, wool styles and sensibilities, the texts of any time, without the



least articulation with the contexts and movements ate the basis of their eras" (Martin-Barbero, 2000: 142).

The concept presented by Giddens, and supported by Martin-Barbero, reinforces Certeau's idea on the distance of the senses of traditions that policies of restoration undertake, to bring the historic heritage close to urban practices that stretch the city for the demands of the market. This double process that involves highlighting tradition and transforming it into something far from the present, ends up, to Certeau, in urban segregation: "The rehabilitated islets make up ghettos of wealthy people and the property 'curettage' consequently becomes 'segregationist operations'" (Certeau, 1996: 196).

The complex process of retradicionalization effected by the policies of *gentrification* follows results, then, in an impasse when the cultural heritage becomes a *relic*. On the one hand, the *relic* expands, according to Giddens, the cultural possibilities of pathways in stretched points and would restrict, according to Certeau, the economic possibilities of certain actors act as subjects in the transformation of these spaces into places. The issue is obviously complex and its discussion is open.

The "expropriation of subjects", of which speaks Certeau (1996), refers to a wider issue than the simple separation of the persons from the places where they lived. His criticism lies precisely on the point that Giddens also explored to refer to changes in local customs turned into *relics*. The historical heritage alienates itself precisely when it dissociates from everyday social practices (or local customs), but also alienates itself equally for not securing the economic conditions of its permanence.

The processes of *gentrification* operate, and thus as strong inducers of retradicionalization aimed less at the recovery of local cultures than at the building of a political legitimacy for its inclusion in the market of cultural goods. However, this retradicionalization many times only occur by transforming the past into a relic, a fact that also may suggest the predominance of cultural aspects artificially selected to operate the double insertion - symbolic and economic - of the ennobled cultural heritage.



## 5 CITY, TERRITORIES, PLACES

Urban transformations rarely result from an immanent development of the city. I believe the opposite is also true: no city too planned and controlled invariably follows the model that has generated it. Mainly as a cultural product, the city is always the convergent result of several different formal and everyday influences. Simmel's analyses (1986, 1997) about the objectification of culture's spiritual content reinforces what I'm trying to state. He speaks of a kind of cultural object that does not depend directly and exclusively from any producer, and is unrelated to the determinations of a single lively subject.

Would this interpretation also apply to the scenarios the ennobled by the policies of *gentrification*, in its seemingly homogeneous monotony? It seems indisputable that this form of urban intervention has helped create a certain aesthetic routine of public life that is many times difficult to develop, as Otilia Arantes asserts: "[...] the rehabilitation of certain districts, especially of urban centers, is nothing but a true consecration of the eternity of the scene - well polished, clean, decorated and itself transformed into a museum" (Arantes, 1998:136).

That view is shared by David Harvey, for whom the aesthetics of the urban landscape becomes the predominant way to recover the meaning of places and of the tradition in the context of flexible accumulation and compression of time-space. The redesigning of the traditions would happen, according to this author, through a romantic aesthetizing of culture, expressed in the form of museums which include an illusory past and transform it into merchandise: "At best, the historical tradition is reorganized as a museum culture, not necessarily of the high-modernist art, but of local history, local production, of the way things were one day made, sold, consumed and integrated in a daily life long lost and often romanticized" (Harvey, 1992: 273).

Harvey recognizes, of course, the "motivational" role of tradition to the processes of identity. However, for the author that wrote about the irregular effects of the space-time compression, it is increasingly unlikely the permanence



of certain aspects of continuity (typical of places) in "[...] flow and frailty of flexible accumulation"(Harvey ,1992: 273).

I believe in the rightness of the views that emphasize the monotony of the ennobled landscapes, whose processes of intervention seem to change these spaces into equivalent goods, in a sort of "market of authenticity" for the search of the centrality and uniqueness of cultural goods in dispute in the context of competition "intercities" (Fortune, 1997). It is in this very direction that Harvey (1992) suggests that the contemporary social production of space awakens a defensive character in which the links between place and social identity arise as a form of the individuals to take place in this "changing world-collage." The chart deductible from Harvey's reflection is suggestive, but pessimistic: the result of standardized urban landscapes would be predominately defensive and particularist niche-places. Almost a correlate to what Sennett (1998)called "destructive communities" to describe public relations that exacerbate intimidated and the tyrannize modern life.

I would like, however, to raise the hypothesis that these places - or "areas of subjectivation" (Deleuze and Guatarri, 1997) - not necessarily result in restrictive settings to public life. Although they are a way to compensate any "sense of loss", as Jameson (1997) highlighted, in saying that the past is reappropriated in the altered form of political places of culture, it is also possible to rethink the construction of these places in the contemporary urban context from the uses and counter-uses of the ennobled spaces. In the areas that go through processes of *gentrification*, such uses can change the landscape and give other meanings to the re-locations of tradition and to the places in spaces of the city. These meanings, or counter-meanings, which differ from those expected by urban policies, contribute to a diversification of the current meanings of the places. This polissemey of places is constantly - but not invariably - subsumed by the official policies of heritage. At first glance, seem the ennobled districts seem to lose their potentialities as a public space for political dissent and equity of participation. A key question, however, is to know how far this "expropriation of subjects" does not correspond to re-appropriationf of other subjects. If, on the



one hand, the practices of *gentrification* separate these places from those who live in them – to the extent that they seem to alienate its user's heritage through economic relations of consumption – on the other, it is possible that this same process expand the interactive possibilities (conflicting or not) among those who interact in them.

Certeau himself offers a clue to rethink the forms of dissent about the uses of urban space. By making the distinction between "strategies" and "tactics", the author allows for the differentiation of the ways to attribute meaning. By "strategy", Certeau means a set of practices that articulate space and power. As the "landscapes of power", by Sharon ZUKIN (2000), they create physical demarcations through which power is distributed and consolidated.

I call strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible from the moment in which a subject will and power (a company, an army, a scientific institution) can be isolated. The strategy posits a place susceptible to be limited as something of its own and be the basis from which the relations with an exteriority of targets and threats can be managed [...] (Certeau, 1994:98).

"Strategy" as "something on its own" means an autonomy or a spatial stability on the circumstances or the frailty of time. In circumscribing a certain place, which it takes for itself, strategy affirms itself as spatialized power and involves the construction of an overall view, a "panoptipo" or, to compare it once more with Zukin, a "landscape of power." On the other hand, the "tactics" are heterogeneous and unpredictable movements in spaces other than their "own":

[...] I call tactic the calculated action that is determined by the absence of an own. So no delimitation from the outside supplies him with the condition of autonomy. Tactic has no place else but the other's. [...] tactic is determined by the lack of power just like strategy is organized by the premise of a power (Certeau, 1994:100-101).

The "tactical trajectories" are thus temporal routes deprived of power and of a place that can be their "own". They occur precisely within the strategic areas, undermining meanings because they are not consistent with those spaces. To keep the comparison with Zukin's terms, the "tactics" may be understood as what is "vernacular" (the powerless) inside the "landscape of power." For the author,



"[...] the landscape of the powerful is clearly opposed to the seal of the powerless - that is, to the social construction we choose to call vernacular [...]" (Zukin, 2000:84). A distinction, however, subsides in that correlation: a vernacular politics in the urban context is not limited to actions in time, deprived of spatial references. Rather, it involves a reappropriation and a qualification of the spaces. When one speaks, for example, of a vernacular architecture, the alternative uses of materials and designs available locally stand out, which are opposed to other plans that would be unrelated to a given reality.

Adjusting such distinction between "strategies and tactics" to the problem of the political uses of urban space in processes of *gentrification*, I would suggest an unfolding of Certeau's scheme from Sharon Zukin's contribution: I would say that the "tactics" when linked to the spatial dimension of a place, which makes it vernacular, are themselves a counter-use able not only to subvert the expected usage of a regulated space, but also to enable the space that results from the "strategies" to split to give rise to different places, from the sociospatial demarcation of difference and the re-signification that these counter-uses held.

Accordingly, I would like to consider, even if briefly, the specific case of the Coin Street, located in the District of Recife, to suggest how the counter-uses can contribute to politicize "tactically" an urban landscape also politicized "strategically" by *gentrification*, to argue that the expropriation of "subjects" does not reduce the public sense of urban space, but can represent a reordering of its interactive logic from the appropriations ( "tactics") of the spaces through the building of places.

Perhaps because of this we can say that Arendt's lesson remains valid today: the public man, even entrenched in their *positions* "gives himself to be known." It is in the public life that people reaffirm their differences and legitimize their world views: the public space is not built on the harmony of the speeches, but in the political communicability of "misunderstanding" (Rancière, 1996), from which different intelligibilities on the same facts emerge, making the democratic possibility possible. Only in the context of public life, and never in the private sphere, people share or dispute realities, from which the plurality of the human



condition flourishes, based on the difficult social coexistence and power relationships:

The power is only effective as the word and the act do not divorce, when the words are not empty and deeds not brutal, when words are not employed to veil intentions but to veil realities [...] power comes to exist among men when they act together, and disappears at the moment when they scatter (Arendt, 1987:212).



## REFERENCES

Agência de Desenvolvimento Econômico do Estado de Pernambuco - AD/DIPER. (1992), *Plano de Revitalização - Bairro do Recife*. Planejamento Urbano e Economia vol.1, Recife.

ADORNO, T. (1987) "A Indústria Cultural". In: Cohn, G.(org.). *Comunicação e Indústria Cultural*. 5 ed. São Paulo, T.A . Queiroz.

ANDERSON, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities*. London, Verso.

**APPADURAI, A. (1986) *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge, University Press.**

ARANTES, A. (2000) *Paisagens Paulistas: transformações do espaço público*. Campinas, Ed.Unicamp.

ARANTES, O. (2000) "Estratégia fatal", In: ° Arantes, C. Vainer e E. Mericato, *A cidade do pensamento único*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2000.

BAUDRILLARD, J.(1984) *Para uma crítica da economia política do signo*. Lisboa, Edições 70.

BENJAMIN, W. (1997) "Paris, Capital do Século XIX". In: Fortuna, C. (org). *Cidade, Cultura e Globalização: ensaios de sociologia*. Oeiras, Celta Editora.

BERNARDES, D. (1996) *Recife, o caranguejo e o viaduto*. Recife, Ed. UFPE.

CANCLINI, N. G. (1993) *El Consumo Cultural en México*. México, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes.

CANCLINI, N. G (1996) *Consumidores e Cidadãos: conflitos multiculturais da globalização*. Rio de Janeiro, Editora UFRJ.

CANCLINI, N. G . (1997) *Culturas Híbridas*. São Paulo, Edusp.

CERTEAU, M. (1996) *A invenção do Cotidiano: artes de fazer*. Petrópolis, vozes.

DURHAM, E. (1984) "Texto II". In: Arantes, Antonio A (org). *Produzindo o passado: estratégias de construção do patrimônio cultural*. São Paulo, Brasiliense.

FEATHERSTONE, M. (1995) *Cultura de Consumo e Pós-modernismo*. São Paulo, Studio Nobel.

FEATHERSTONE, M. (1997) *O Desmanche da Cultura: globalização, pós-modernismo e identidade*. São Paulo, Studio Nobel.



FORTUNA, C. (1997) “Destradicionalização e Imagem da Cidade: o caso de Évora”. In: Fortuna, C. (org). *Cidade, Cultura e Globalização: ensaios de sociologia*. Oeiras, Celta Editora.

FREITAS, M. B. (1992) “Dos Monumentos Arquitetônicos aos Sítios Históricos Urbanos: um estudo sobre a evolução do padrão de intervenção estatal nos sítios históricos do Brasil”. Dissertação de Mestrado em Desenvolvimento Urbano. Recife, UFPE.

FREYRE, G. (1996) *Sobrados e Mucambos*. São Paulo, Record.

GIDDENS, A. (1991) *As Conseqüências da Modernidade*. São Paulo, Ed. Unesp.

GIDDENS, A (1997) “A vida em uma sociedade pós-tradicional”. In: Giddens et all. *Modernização Reflexiva: política, tradição e estética na ordem social moderna*. São Paulo, Ed. Unesp.

HALL, S.(1995) *A Questão da Identidade Cultural*. Campinas, IFCH-UNICAMP.

HARVEY, D. (1992) *Condição pós-moderna*. São Paulo, Loyola.

LASH, S. (1997) “A reflexividade e seus duplos: estrutura, estética, comunidade”. In: Beck, Ulrich et all. *Modernização Reflexiva*. São Paulo, Ed.Unesp.

LEITE, Rogerio Proença. (1998), “A nação como sistema e os novos nacionalismos”. CEDEC, *Lua Nova*, nº 44.

LEITE, Rogerio Proença .(2002), “Contra-usos e Espaço Público: notas sobre a construção social dos lugares na *Manguetown*”. *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, 49.

LEITE, Rogerio Proença. (2007), *Contra-usos da cidade: lugares e espaço público na experiência urbana contemporânea*. 2 ed. Campinas, Editora da Unicamp.

LEITE, Rogerio Proença (2013), “Consuming Heritage: Counter-uses of the city and gentrification”, *Vibrant – Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*, 10, 1.

LUBAMBO, C. W. (1991), *O Bairro do Recife: entre o corpo santo e o marco zero*. Recife, CEPE/Fundação de Cultura Cidade do Recife.

MARTÍN-BARBERO, J. (2000), “Dislocaciones del tiempo y nuevas topografías de la memoria. In: Hollanda, H.B. and Resende, B. *Artelatina: cultura, globalização e identidades contemporâneas*. Rio de Janeiro, Aeroplano Editora.

PCR/URB/DPE. (1997) *Bairro do Recife: Programa de Reabilitação do Patrimônio Cultural Urbano/Programa MINC/IPHAN/BID*. Recife,



PCR/URB/ERBR. (1998) *Fórum Bairro do Recife*. Recife.

PCR/URB/ERBR. (1998) Proposta de Tombamento do Núcleo Original da Cidade do Recife – “Dentro de Portas”. Recife.

PERRIN, J.B. (1980) “O exemplo francês de proteção, do remanejamento e da valorização do patrimônio histórico urbano”. In: Pró-memória-Spahn-MEC, *Restauração e revitalização de núcleos históricos: análise face à experiência francesa*. Brasília: Iphan.

PERRUCI, G. (1978), *A República das Usinas*. Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra.

SMITH, Neil. (1996) *The New Urban Frontier: gentrification and revanchist city*. London and New York, Routledge.

ZUKIN, Sharon. (1995) *The Cultures of Cities*. Cambridge, Massachussetts, Blackweell.